

Needs Analysis for the Department of Neighborhoods



This section describes the need for City investments to support neighborhood-level activities that empower people to make positive contributions in their communities. The assessment highlights the planning activities and processes by which the Department of Neighborhoods determines the various programming needs of communities.

The Department of Neighborhoods (DON) creates partnerships between the City and its neighborhoods in order to provide the neighborhoods with tools and resources for planning and development which reflect their needs and values, to preserve and enhance Seattle's diverse neighborhoods; empower people to make positive contributions in their communities; and to bring government closer to all people, ensuring that it is responsive.

The Department of Neighborhoods will focus on strategies to develop and build strong and healthy communities in low- and moderate-income neighborhoods. The Department will help low-income residents meet their needs by ensuring that public services and programs are accessible to all regardless of race, ethnicity, language or physical or developmental ability. These programs – the P-Patch Program, Neighborhood Planning Implementation and Communities That Care – strengthen and reinforce the Department's core values. These programs also reflect the City's priorities of building strong and healthy communities by working in low-income neighborhoods where there are language and cultural barriers, and by making sure that at-risk-youth are provided a safe neighborhood and family environment to perform well in school and to be a positive member in their community.

A principal source for the Department's need analysis has been the 1999 adopted neighborhood plans. In determining which neighborhood plan recommendations could be funded with CDBG funds, the Department used several criteria to evaluate potential projects. One of the criteria was using Key Strategies in the matrix of the adopted neighborhood plans in income-eligible communities to assess projects for potential funding. Another criterion was the list of priority projects (five) developed by neighborhood plan stewardship groups in late 2003. To help refine these priorities, the Department asked the affected City departments to comment on these priority lists. This final list was compiled in May 2004.

The Department looked at three of its core programs – the P-Patch Program, Communities That Care, and Neighborhood Plan Implementation – as a vehicle for implementing neighborhood plan projects using CDBG funds. In the past DON has partnered with other departments (Parks, OED, SDOT) to implement projects. DON will continue to leverage funding and create partnerships with other departments who have the capacity to construct capital improvements projects that enhance the quality of life for low-income residents.

A large part of the Department's needs assessment is based on the neighborhood planning process that began in 1995 and culminated with their adoption by City Council in 1999. The Communities That Care community-based planning activity not only relies on neighborhood plans, but the published 2003 report, *The State of Children and Youth in Seattle* (see Appendix R), to document the needs of youth and families.

P-Patch Program

The P-Patch Program typifies DON's goal of building strong and healthy neighborhoods. Several neighborhood plans – North Rainier, Delridge, Westwood-Highland Park, Central Area and Columbia City – mention the need for establishing community gardens. A potential p-patch becomes a priority for the Department after using the criteria of neighborhood plans, strong community support, and leveraging other potential fund sources, i.e., the 2000 Parks Levy. The Department also places a high value on working with underserved populations to ensure broad participation in each garden.

The Department of Neighborhoods' P-Patch Program with some assistance from the non-profit P-Patch Trust provides community garden space for residents in 55 Seattle

neighborhoods. Over 2,000 plots serve more than 6,000 urban gardeners on 15 acres of land. Special programs serve low-income, disabled, youth and non-English speaking populations. P-Patch Community Gardens are also viewed as precious community open space by neighbors. Eight gardens located in Southeast Seattle provide gardening opportunities for low-income residents including more than 100 Korean and Laotian families. The intensity of production in these P-Patches is testimony to not only gardeners' skills but also of the need for fresh, organic and culturally appropriate produce. P-Patch gardeners have shown their concern for those without the benefit of fresh organic vegetables by supplying 7 to 10 tons of produce to Seattle food banks each year.

Cultivating Communities, a component of the P-Patch Program, focuses on working with low-income immigrant communities primarily living in Seattle Housing Authority (SHA) housing, and other low-income neighborhoods in Southeast and Southwest Seattle. Cultivating Communities provides the residents of Seattle Housing Authority Garden Communities (New Holly, Rainier Vista and High Point) the opportunity to grow culturally appropriate produce in safe, healthy community-based environments. Cultivating Communities also has programs that provide economic opportunity through Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) enterprises and works with 200 youth in SHA communities in after school nutrition programs through gardening.

Cultivating Communities now has twenty community, youth and CSA gardens within the four low-income housing communities. The program reaches approximately 400 families. Most gardeners are recent immigrants from Southeast Asia and from the Horn of Africa. Gardeners increase self-sufficiency by growing culturally appropriate food, which is often unavailable in local supermarkets or prohibitively expensive, and elders retain a family role by growing food and passing on gardening skills. Most of the gardeners participate in community building events such as work parties and potlucks. The gardens help to promote healing for those who have experienced the stress of civil wars in their home countries.

During the City of Seattle's Neighborhood Planning effort, twenty-seven of thirty-seven plans mentioned the need for community gardens or community open space. The following neighborhood plans are of most interest: Broadview/Haller Lake, Central Area, North Rainier, Columbia City, Delridge, Westwood-Highland Park. The P-Patch program will focus its efforts to rebuild, improve and create new community gardens in these low-income neighborhoods.

Communities That Care

Communities That Care (CTC) is a community-based planning model that promotes positive youth development. The CTC model is a research-based strategy for involving neighborhoods in addressing the needs of youth and gives them an opportunity to impact policy decisions regarding youth programs.

The need to provide a community-based, neighborhood specific approach to addressing youth risk factors is evident in "The State of Children and Youth in Seattle: 2003 Report" (see

Appendix R). This report shows how multiple risk factors for youth are concentrated in particular low income areas of the city. Data presented clearly identifies how teen births and academic failures are associated with those areas of Seattle where the majority of low-income families live. In addition, low-income youth and families are more likely to face risks throughout the city.

The report for example notes that less than 10% of African-American tenth graders met the math standard of the state's assessment test. Fewer than 50% of Hispanic youth completed high school in four years. These students are often from low-income families.

Since each of these neighborhoods (the Central Area and Lake City) has different characteristics, populations, and needs, the CTC approach has been adopted to engage citizens in the identification of priority services for their communities. CTC uses data that is provided in the report coupled with youth self-identified behavior through a survey, to help communities identify the specific risk and protective factors they need to address. The process then guides communities in the selection of proven programs that will reduce the likelihood youth will engage in negative behaviors.

The foundation of *Communities That Care* is the 2001 *Communities That Care* Youth Survey that was administered in 26 middle and high schools throughout the Seattle Public School District. Youth responded to questions regarding the levels of risk and protection in their peer, home, school and neighborhood environments. The *Communities That Care* Youth Survey is to be administered every two years and was recently administered to students in March 2004. In addition to this survey, the City of Seattle provides census data, crime statistics, school data and other appropriate information.

Through the CTC model, community members:

- Review the factors that influence their youth
- Prioritize the factors they believe are most important
- Implement effective prevention strategies that address their specific community needs

Through the CTC planning process in 2003, South Park community members began to develop a common focus for their youth and family services. But more importantly, the community members enhanced their partnerships that allowed them to effectively work together on neighborhood issues. An **outcome** of this 2003 community based planning process was that the South Park CTC team collaborated on Youth Development grant proposals and were awarded 2004 funding for the following programs:

- Teen Outreach Program (TOP) – involves teens volunteering to improve their community
- Life Skills Training – provides appropriate decision-making skills leading to the prevention of substance abuse and other problem behaviors
- Friends and Family Nights – Monthly family dinners with educational discussions and presentations

The successful 2003 effort in South Park has provided the City of Seattle with useful information to help guide appropriate policy and funding decisions. The City implemented

CTC because it wanted to engage community members and to determine how to shift our current resources to more outcome-based youth services.

Currently, the Department is funded to implement the CTC planning model in the Rainier Beach community. Additional funding will be sought to implement the model in South Park. During the 2005-2008 time period, if the Rainier Beach and South Park CTC planning models are successfully implemented, the Department's goal is to begin the planning process in two additional low-income Seattle neighborhoods, the Central Area and Lake City.

CTC implementation in Rainier Beach, Central District and Lake City is consistent with their individual neighborhood plans. Each neighborhood expressed the need to improve and/or expand social services in their community especially for youth. CTC provides an opportunity for these communities to refine their initial findings.

Central Area Neighborhood Plan

- Encourage community partnerships and collaboration in the allocation of public dollars to existing organizations, and the planning of new programs and services to the Central Area
- Coordinate community participation in developing funding policies.....develop and/or identify a community-based infrastructure, methods of allocation and use of private and public funding
- Identify service gaps and asset-based community solutions

Lake City Neighborhood Plan

- Work to expand or develop programs and services needed by a diverse population
- Evaluate the need for additional social services based on the identified need
- Improve services to non-English speaking citizens
- Provide youth with lawful, constructive activities

The Communities That Care model outlines preventive actions that can be taken to develop the knowledge, skills and values needed to achieve academic excellence and become positive contributing members in society. CTC provides a system for developing an integrated approach to positive youth development and the prevention of problem behavior.

Neighborhood Plan Implementation

The Department of Neighborhoods will continue to use the adopted neighborhood plans as one of the tools to select capital projects to be implemented using CDBG funds. Using neighborhood plans, especially the plans' Key Strategies, will help target funds for capital improvement projects in low to moderate-income communities. These capital improvement projects include the repairing or upgrading the City's infrastructure, such as sidewalks, roadways, parks, and pedestrian lights and other improvements for public safety.

To help refine neighborhood plan priorities, the Department in late 2003 asked neighborhood plan stewardship groups to list their top five priorities. A finalized list with comments and contact people from other City departments was developed in late spring 2004. This compiled list will be another tool to help DON evaluate potential capital improvement projects for CDBG funding in 2005 and 2006. A list several potential projects has been reviewed in low-income eligible neighborhoods – the Central Area, North Rainier Valley, Rainier Beach, Georgetown, Westwood/Highland, Pioneer Square, South Park, University District and the International District. The projects range from traffic and pedestrian safety improvements, open space and park improvements, and streetscape enhancements. Preliminary discussions will begin with the appropriate City departments concerning the possibility of funding and implementing these prospective projects.

Finally, the Department will continue to play a vital role in enhancing the business areas in low-income neighborhoods (South Park, Rainier Beach and South Delridge) by working with various community-based organizations to address their needs.

Many of these neighborhood plan capital projects will increase the livability and enhance the quality of life of residents in these low-to-moderate income neighborhoods